



Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee

Date: November 5, 2019

Time: 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Location: ACMi, Studio A, 85 Park Avenue, Arlington Heights

Minutes

Attendance: Ali Carter, Economic Development Coordinator; Erin Zwirko, Assistant Director of Planning and Community Development; Janet O’Riordan, Old Schwamb Mill Board of Directors; Rob Davison, resident; Len Diggins, ACMi; Kin Lau, Arlington Redevelopment Board; Jason Forney, resident; Stacey Mulroy, Recreation Department; Julie Horvath, Century 21 Adams; Kristin Anderson, Forced Exposure; Pam Hallett, Housing Corporation of Arlington.

Guests: Don Seltzer, JoAnne Preston, Beth Melofchik, Jon Gersh, Mark Rosenthal, Chris Rowell.

1. Welcome and introductions

Jenny Raitt welcomed everyone presented some background information on how the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan (AHNAP) came to be. The plan was made in response to work done by community members, who formed the group Support Arlington Heights, in 2016. Their work led directly into the planning process which culminated in the creation of the AHNAP, and this committee will help with the implementation of the plan.

2. Icebreaker

Committee members shared their name, affiliation, and an anecdote about Arlington Heights with the group.

3. Meeting objectives and purpose of the AHNAP Implementation Committee

Ali went over the objectives of the meeting and the committee’s purpose in accordance with its charter

Objectives of this meeting:

Learn more about other AHNAPIC members.

Learn more about the purpose and goals of the committee.

Inform the implementation of the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan

Purpose of the committee: The Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee will oversee implementation of the

Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan (AHNAP), including recommendations related to zoning, design standards, parking, wayfinding, streetscape improvements, placemaking at the MBTA-owned Arlington Heights Busway, and other local regulations.

4. Key recommendations of the plan

1. Create one entirely new business district to replace the existing four business districts
2. Re-zone part of the existing Industrial District, the four-acre 30 Park Avenue/50 Lowell Street parcels as a Planned Unit Development (PUD)
3. Provide for a tiered Environmental Design Review process
4. Revise the existing Design Standards to ensure they reflect neighborhood specifics
5. Work with the MBTA to better utilize the bus turn-around lot
6. Explore ways in which creative placemaking projects, both temporary and medium/long-term, can bring vitality to the Heights and foster a more active and vibrant street life.

Ali recognized that “placemaking” is a term of art and will share resources on it with committee members via email.

This committee is a subcommittee of the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB). Any recommendations this committee makes that have implications for zoning would be referred to the Zoning Bylaw Working Group (ZBWG). Recommendations in the AHNAP that refer to mixed use and multifamily zoning recommendations that received no action at Annual Town Meeting 2019 will obviously be reconsidered.

Short-term Actions—Non-zoning recommendations that this committee can undertake

1. Establish a zoning committee, or work with the existing town-wide zoning committee, to continue exploring the zoning for Arlington Heights including the recommendations in this report.

This committee is charged with implementing the plan, however not the zoning recommendations in the plan.

2. Through the aforementioned committee and other outreach activities, support the changes to multi-family and mixed-use zoning that are being proposed at the spring 2019 Annual Town Meeting, as these warrant articles will have impacts on the future actions needed in Arlington Heights.

This point is moot.

3. Determine the best options for future bylaw changes to implement the zoning changes in this report that are accepted by the committee.

Again, this point is moot.

4. Zoning committee should prepare recommended zoning changes for Arlington Heights, both in the business district and the PUD

Again, this point is moot.

5. Additional short-term non-zoning actions
 - a. Seek changes to local regulations (and if needed, to state limits on liquor licenses) to make it easier to open restaurants, as these are a major “wanted element for the Heights;
 - b. Plan for more public events (historical reenactments, street closures for dance parties, arts events, etc.) to draw crowds to the Heights, to meet the residents’ desires for more community events, and to support commercial activity by increasing visibility and foot traffic;

Old Schwamb Mill’s 2019 Oktoberfest, with over 1,200 visitors, is a good example of a successful community event in the Heights, but there needs to be more of them.

- c. Begin negotiations with the MBTA regarding future temporary or permanent use of all or part of the bus turn-around for public events (dance parties, farmers’ markets, music events-; try to host some events during the summer of 2019;

Ali has been in touch with the MBTA’s Real Estate and Service Planning Divisions to begin this conversation.

- d. Coordinate with the implementation of the Arts and Culture Action Plan to plan locations of murals to provide visual interest and identity for the Heights, to support arts pop-ups in vacant storefronts, to plan for future installations (temporary or permanent) of public art, and to plan for community events;

Working with this committee to coordinate arts and culture-related events and/or activities has been added to the annual work plan of the Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture, the committee that is charged with implementing the Arlington Arts and Culture Action Plan.

- e. Make the Heights a more desirable location to go to spend money by improving the ease of finding parking, improving walkability, and enhancing the experience of shopping here through targeted public and private improvements, etc.

We welcome ideas from committee members on streetscape improvements in the neighborhood, including those related to wayfinding and amenities.

5. Community resources brainstorming

Ali asked the group to share any people, organizations, grants, or any other resources that committee members could think of that might help with realizing the implementation of the plan's recommendations

- a) 2015 Arlington Master Plan
- b) 2010 Arlington Commercial Area Revitalization Plan (aka Koff Report)
- c) Placemaking resources from National Main Street Center, Project for Public Spaces, Better Block Foundation.
- d) 2011 Battle Road Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
- e) 2019 Mill Brook Corridor Report
- f) 2018 Arlington Reservoir Master Plan
- g) Open Space and Recreation Plan
- h) Analysis of town-owned vs. privately owned property in study area
- i) Pull from best practices in East Arlington and Arlington Center
- j) Analyzing connections and wayfinding opportunities between business district, bike path, and reservoir
- k) Enabling multiple modes of transportation to and from district; traffic considerations and rt. 77 service
- l) 8 80 Cities
- m) Use the rink for winter events
- n) Collaborations with arts community on First Friday events
- o) Senior and intergenerational events
- p) Local examples of sharing economy (e.g. Little Fox Shop and Fix-It Clinics)
- q) Alignment with Metrocommon goals

6. Regular meeting schedule

After brief discussion, it was concluded that Tuesday evenings at 6:30 pm was a convenient regular meeting date, but we would coordinate with the Recreation Dept. so as not to interfere with the Park and Rec Commission meetings. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday December 10th at 6:30 pm, location in Arlington Heights to be determined.

7. Closing and next steps

Prior to concluding the meeting, community members in attendance shared their names and offered comments and suggestions. Don Seltzer suggested that the plan was not official. Beth Melofchik suggested a Sunday market in Arlington Heights similar to those held in Davis Square, Somerville. JoAnne Preston advised the committee to consider climate change in all aspects of the plan's implementation, including planting trees, preventing the creation of heat islands, and waste created

by construction materials. Chris Rowell shared that he is a Heights resident who formerly served on the Board of Directors of Allston Village Main Street when he lived in the city of Boston, and he thinks there is a lot of unrealized opportunity in the Heights. Mark Rosenthal shared that Arlington has a history of innovation and invention with the creation of very early software. He also harkened back to when the Penzey's Spices location was a Long John Silver's restaurant. He bemoaned the loss of regular Irish seisúns at the Green Briar in Brighton when it closed, and expressed a desire for such gatherings to find a home in Arlington Heights. Ali recommended reaching out to the Roasted Granola or the Old Schwamb Mill to host such an event. Jon Gersh expressed a desire to bring more business to Arlington to relieve the residential tax burden.

Meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.